

COOPERATIVE GAMES

WHAT ARE COOPERATIVE GAMES?

Cooperative games emphasize participation, challenge, and fun rather than defeating someone. Cooperative games emphasize play rather than competition. Cooperative games are not new. Some of the classic games we participated in as children *are* classic because of the play emphasis. There may be competition involved, but the outcome of the competition is not losing and sitting out the rest of the game. Instead, it may involve switching teams so that everyone ends up on the winning team.

OUTDOOR ACTIVE GAMES

SARDINES

This can be played anywhere, indoors or out. The goal is similar to “Hide and Seek,” except that “it” hides first. Everyone else then tries to find “it.” When someone finds “it,” they hide with “it” in the same spot. The game ends when everyone finds the hiding spot of “it.”

BLOB TAG

In this variation of “tag,” the persons who are caught join hands with the “it” person to form a blob. As more people are caught, the blob becomes larger. It’s probably a good idea to limit the playing area so that the blob does not have to chase people through the neighborhood.

BRITISH BULLDOG

The playing area is a rectangular open field with well-defined boundaries. One person stands in the middle and is the bulldog. Everyone else stands on one end outside the boundary. When ready, the bulldog yells, “British Bulldog, one, two, three.” Everyone must run from one end of the field to the other. The bulldog must grab people, lift them off the ground, and yell, “British bulldog, one, two, three.” Each caught person then becomes a bulldog also. Eventually everyone will become a bulldog.

Variation: Instead of lifting people off the ground, the bulldog can simply hold on while yelling.

CATERPILLAR

The players lie on their stomachs, side to side, with their arms straight out in front. The person on the end begins to roll over the top of the row of bodies until he or she gets to the end. This can be done as a race, with two teams competing to get to a predetermined point.

—from *New Games*

EENY-EINY-OVER

Remember this classic game? All you need is a large building—a church works well—and a medium-size ball. The game begins with two teams, one on each side of the building. One team has the ball and throws it over the building while yelling “eeny-einy-over.” The throwing team then runs around the building and tries to tag players on the receiving team. Tagged people join the other team. The receiving team tries to avoid being tagged, of course, and also can throw the ball at players on the throwing team. Anyone who gets hit switches teams. Players are safe when they reach the other side of the building. The game ends when everyone is on the same team.

Variation: Players are safe only when they do a complete revolution of the building.

FLYING DUTCHMAN

The group forms a circle and holds hands, with one pair remaining outside the circle. Holding hands, the couple on the outside walks the perimeter of the circle. They choose a point in the circle to break the handhold of two people. When that happens, the outside couple runs around the circle in one direction while the couple whose handhold was broken runs in the opposite direction. The couple who loses the race back to the open spot is “it” for the next round.

—from *New Games*

SLAUGHTER

The arena is a circle about 30 feet in diameter with a clearly defined boundary. Two holes about a foot wide are dug out at opposite sides of the circle (substitutes for the holes are appropriate). All players take off their shoes. Balls are placed in the holes. Each team, kneeling, forms a huddle around its own ball. At the signal, both teams try to move their ball into the other team's hole. As long as you're on your knees and within the boundaries of the circle, anything goes. The only other rule is that to neutralize the opponent, you can drag your opponent outside of the circle. If any part of a player's body crosses the line, that player is out.

—from *New Games*

TOSS THE BIRD

This is a tag game with a twist. The "bird" can be a knotted towel or some other soft object suitable for throwing. You can have as many as you think are necessary. The point is that you can't be tagged if you are holding a bird. People can toss the bird(s) to each other to help "protect" each other from being caught. Obviously you will want to have fewer birds than you have people who are being chased. More than one person can be "it."

—from *The Bottomless Bag*

ROCK/PAPER/SCISSORS

This is the "football scrimmage" version of rock/paper/scissors. The end zones need to be clearly defined. To begin, each team huddles and decides which play to run—either rock, paper, or scissors. Then the two teams meet in the playing area. If your team's symbol wins, you chase the other team back to its end zone, trying to tag the team members before they get there. If you lose, you must dash to your own end zone before you're caught. Those people who get caught change to the other team. The game ends when everyone is on the same team.

—from *New Games*

WALKING STATUES

Two teams start from opposite ends of the field. The leader stands in the center of the field. The goal is to reach the leader first. Teams can move only when the leader is facing the other team. If individuals are caught moving, they must go back to the start.

INDOOR GAMES

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

One person is selected to leave the room and should be out of earshot. The rest of the group chooses some action it would like the absent person to perform. When ready, the group calls the person back in. The means of reinforcement is clapping. By clapping louder or softer, the group influences the subject to do whatever action the group wants.

—from *Games*

CONTINUOUS STORY

The rules are simple. One person creates a story line and everybody in turn adds a few sentences until the story is complete or everybody gets tired.

IF YOU LOVE ME, WON'T YOU PLEASE, PLEASE SMILE?

Everyone is seated in a circle with a volunteer standing in the middle. The volunteer sits in the lap of the seated person of his or her choice, looks them in the eyes, and says, "If you love me, won't you please, please smile?" The seated person responds by saying, "You know I love you, but I just can't smile." This must be said without smiling. If the person does smile, he or she becomes the person in the middle.

PRINCESS UGGAWUGGA

The purpose of this game is to make your opponent laugh. In pairs, one person starts by saying, "Princess Uggawugga is dead, gone, and deceased." The other person responds by saying, "How and when did she die?" The game continues with one person asking questions and the other responding until someone laughs.

WORD WHISKERS

A word whisker is a time-filler word like "uh," "er," "um," "you know," "okay," etc. The object is to try to talk for 30 seconds without using a word whisker. Not talking for more than three seconds is also a word whisker.

—from *Games*

BOTTICELLI

One person is “it.” “It” must think of the name of a person or a fictitious character. This character is referred to by the initial of his or her last name (e.g., “Mr. F.”). The players, in turn, ask “it” yes or no questions to discover the name of “its” character. However, they must earn the opportunity to ask each question by asking “it” to name a character with the same initial in response to their questions. For example, “it” begins play with the statement, “I am thinking of a Mr. B.” A player then asks “it” a question such as, “Was Mr. B. a president?” If “it” cannot name a president whose name starts with B, the player has earned the right to ask “it” one yes or no question for a clue to the character’s identity. However, if “it” is able to name a Mr. B. who was a president, that person forfeits the opportunity to question “it.” The player who correctly guesses the name of “its” character is the new “it.”

—from *Games*

GOING TO THE MOON

This is a guessing/deductive game in which the first person establishes a word pattern for everyone else to figure out. He or she says, “I’m going to the moon and I’m going to take (name an object).” Everyone else follows by repeating the same phrase but naming a different object with the same pattern. Patterns could include words that start with the same letter as the speaking person’s name, words with double consonants, or words that begin with the last letter of the previous word.

—from *Games*

GHOST

The object of the game is to avoid completing a word. The first player names a letter and succeeding players continue to name letters in an order that spells a word, while attempting to avoid completing a word. If you do complete a word, you must take a letter from the word “ghost” in the same way as when you play “horse” in basketball.

Variation: Letters can be added either after or before the previously named letters.

—from *Games*

HAWAIIAN HAND CLAP

The players sit in a circle or a line and count off. Then they set up a 1-2-3-4 rhythm by slapping their knees, clapping their hands, and snapping their fingers—first their right and then their left. Everyone does this in unison. Once the rhythm is established, the first player calls his or her own number on the first finger snap and someone else’s number on the second finger snap. On the next sequence of finger snaps, the person whose number was called must say his or her own number and someone else’s. Players who miss their turn, say the numbers too early, or say a nonexistent number must move to the end of the line. Everyone’s number will change as the players move up and down the line.

Variation: The people who miss can sit out instead of going to the end of the line. Everyone else keeps the same number for the whole game so that players must remember which numbers are in and which are out.

PEEK-A-WHO NAME GAME

Materials: one opaque blanket or sheet

Form two teams. Have two people who are not on either of the teams hold the blanket up by the ends so that it is vertical or perpendicular to the ground. The teams gather on opposite sides of the blanket. One volunteer from each team crouches behind the blanket. When the blanket is dropped, each player tries to say the other person's name first. Whoever loses joins the other team. Eventually no one will be left on the losing team.

—from *The Bottomless Bag*

WAMPUM NAME GAME

Materials: a foam sword or rolled newspaper wrapped in tape

Seat everyone in a circle with feet facing in and one person in the middle. Holding the play sword or rolled newspaper, the middle person should be able to reach the feet of everyone in the circle. The game begins with one person saying the name of another. The middle person tries to hit the feet of the named player before the named player can say someone else's name. The game continues until someone gets caught, at which point that person goes to the middle.

—from *The Bottomless Bag*

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